

THE MARYLAND STATE HORTICULTURAL DEPARTMENT

Maryland Agricultural College, College Park, Md.

Circular No. 15.

May, 25, 1900.

Emergency Circular on the Treatment of Pear Blight

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The rapid development of Pear Blight, since the trees came into bloom necessitates the distribution of a special circular upon the subject. Pear orchards on the Eastern shore and in Western Maryland that have been examined within the past few days show that in certain varieties such as Bartletts and LeContes the blossoms and young fruit are practically all dead. Keifers have suffered much less than some others, but even these when growing near other varieties, that are more susceptible to blight are sometimes seriously affected. Since the blossoms that have been attacked by blight are past recovery, the important question is how can the trees themselves be saved? The organisms that have destroyed the blossoms, are still alive and are working their way downward between the bark and the wood, and unless something is done promptly the lives of thousands of pear trees will be destroyed. Fortunately in most of the trees examined to-day the blight has extended but a little distance below the point of attack. Hence by removing the fruit spurs a large majority of the organisms will be destroyed. In a short time the disease will extend downward through the spurs into the branches and finally into the trunks of the trees which will eventually become girdled. As stated in a previous circular (No. 3), the only known remedy for this disease consists in cutting out and burning the diseased twigs and branches. If this is done promptly thousands of trees that would otherwise be destroyed by the blight may be saved, but every day reduces the chances of

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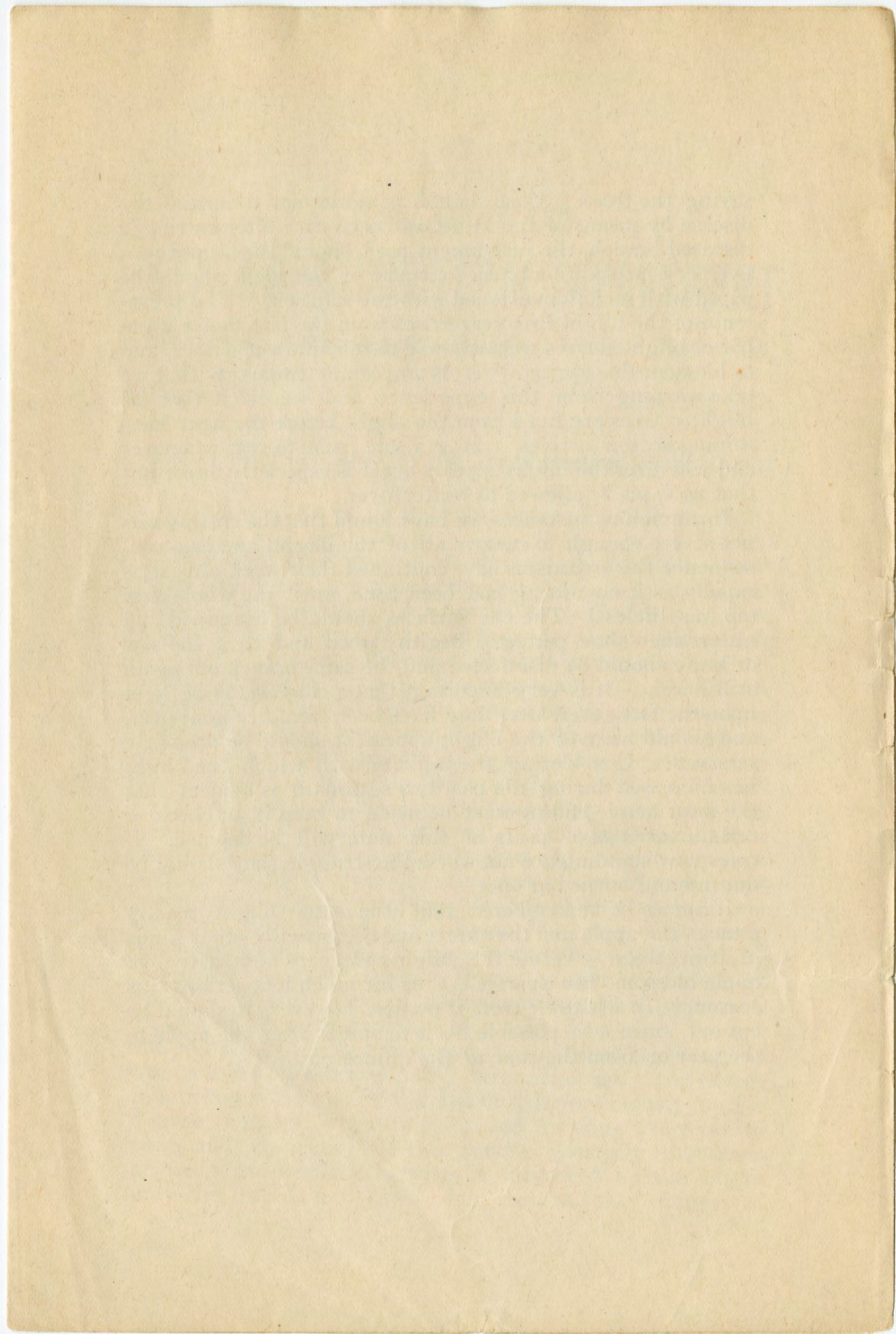
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saving the trees. Care should be taken not to spread the disease by means of the knife, and each time after cutting a diseased branch, the instrument used should be dipped in a five per cent solution of carbolic acid or the blade should be wiped with a cloth moistened with the solution. The prevalence of the blight this year arises from the fact that a number of blighted trees were allowed to remain over winter, and to blossom this spring. It is important therefore that we take warning from this experience and see to it that all blighted trees are freed from the blight before the next blossoming season arrives. It is a safe rule to cut whenever and wherever the blight appears but it is especially important that no cases be allowed to winter over.

In numerous instances we have found that the cutting was not severe enough to remove all of the blight, and as a consequence the organisms have continued their work almost as rapidly as if no cutting had been done, until the whole tree top was lifeless. The cut surfaces should be examined and unless they show perfectly healthy wood and bark the saw or knife should be disinfected and the same branch cut again still lower. It is very important that a close watch be kept upon the trees even after they have been carefully gone over, and should more of the blight appear, it should be promptly removed. Considering the rapidity with which the blight has increased during the past two seasons it is evident that the most heroic efforts must be made to keep it in check or certain varieties of pears in this state will be doomed. If trees now standing are not worth the struggle they should be dug up and burned at once.

It must be remembered that the same blight readily attacks the apple and the quince and occasionally other kinds of fruit trees. While the blight was very destructive to apple blossoms last year, it is thus far much less serious this season. In whatever trees it occurs, however, it should be cut out, since it is possible for it to spread from the apple to the pear or from the pear to the quince etc.